

STATE OF THE TRAILS 2005

National Trails System, Salt Lake City

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



National Trails, Salt Lake City

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Who We Are, What We Do

National Trails, Salt Lake City (NTSL) is a National Park Service office created to administer the California, Mormon Pioneer, Oregon, and Pony Express National Historic Trails. Together with a sister office in Santa Fe, we are part of a larger National Park Service operation: the National Trails System, Intermountain Region.

National Historic Trails are designated by Congress and typically cross thousands of miles of federal, state, and private lands. The National Park Service directly owns or manages very few of those miles. Instead, we work closely with the many public agencies, non-profit organizations, commercial interests, and individuals who own and care for trail properties. In partnership with them, we help to map and mark trails for public use, conduct historical and archeological research, develop visitor services and facilities, tell the trails' stories, and protect and preserve trail remnants along those historic routes.

Our partners are the key to our successes. This State of the Trails report summarizes what we accomplished together in 2005.

Milestones 2005: A Summary

In cooperation with numerous agencies, organizations, and individuals along four national historic trails, National Trails, Salt Lake City accomplished the following from October 2004 through September 2005:

- ✓ Supported nine new Challenge Cost Share partnership projects for interpretation, research, outreach, and resource protection across four trails.
- ✓ Marked auto tour routes for three national historic trails.
- ✓ Updated and reformatted four NPS trails websites, to be published in the summer of 2006.
- ✓ Trained two groups of partners in the use of a web-based system enabling them to collect and upload Geographic Information System field data.
- ✓ Published an auto tour route interpretive booklet for three trails across Kansas and Missouri, electronically published a similar guide for a fourth trail in Illinois and Iowa, and drafted a guide for all four trails across Nebraska.
- ✓ Reviewed over 125 compliance documents submitted by other agencies for federal undertakings on four trails, and helped develop alternatives and mitigation for several of those undertakings.
- ✓ Provided significant funding support to our partner trail organizations.
- ✓ Certified the Alcove Spring site near Blue Rapids, Kan., as an official part of the Oregon and California National Historic Trails.

Trails Programs and Partnerships

California and Oregon Trails

The Oregon and California National Historic Trails follow largely the same corridor from the Missouri River to southwestern Wyoming, where they split. To that point, they share many of the same partner organizations, resources, and stories.



Oregon-California Trails Association tour at Donner Spring, on the Hastings Cutoff in Utah.

The Oregon-California Trails Association (OCTA) and the Oregon Historic Trails Advisory Council (OHTAC) are key partners on these two trails, providing leadership in resource protection, education, research, interpretive projects, and more. In 2005 our staffers represented the National Park Service at several OHTAC and OCTA board meetings and field trips and helped with OCTA's annual convention in Salt Lake City. We also provided \$68,600 to support OCTA convention activities, organizational needs, personnel costs, and trail restoration.

Collecting Trail Data

NTSL provided \$20,000 in Challenge Cost Share Program (CCSP) matching funds to teach 15 OCTA volunteers to collect accurate Geographic Information System data on trail swales and related sites along the Oregon and California trails. Another \$12,642 in CCSP funding supported a volunteer project to GPS the

Oregon Trail from the Idaho border to the End of the Trail Interpretive Center in Oregon City.

Commemorating Ezra Meeker

NTSL awarded OCTA and the Ezra Meeker Society, of Puyallup, Wash., \$29,968 in CCSP funding to help celebrate Ezra Meeker's Oregon Trail trek of 1906-08. Meeker, who emigrated over the Oregon Trail as a young man, marked and raised awareness of the trail by retracing his trek with ox and wagon in 1904 and 1906.



Ezra Meeker at Chimney Rock, 1906

Now, 100 years later, a dozen OCTA and Meeker Society members will retrace Meeker's commemorative trip – with his original wagon—from Puyallup to St. Joseph, Mo. Participants will dress in period attire and perform evening programs at selected trail venues along the route, ending at the 2006 OCTA convention in St. Joseph, Missouri. For schedule information, go to www.octa-trails.org.

Telling the Trails' Stories

NTSL's interpretive specialist worked closely with several partners over the past year to tell the trails' stories at key sites along our National Historic Trails. One project involves developing new outdoor exhibits for the Alcove Spring Preservation Association, of Blue Rapids, Kan., for the emigrant campground and the grave of Sara Keyes, a Donner Party member who died there. Also in the works



Consultation on the Carson Pass project

are outdoor exhibits for the Old Freighters Museum in Nebraska City, Neb., for the 19th century freighting office there; the Caribou County (Idaho) Historical Society, for the Soda Springs emigrant camping area in southeastern Idaho; and the Nevada/California OCTA Chapter, for the Carson Pass and Big Tree Route of the California NHT.



NPS personnel and volunteers investigating possible trail locale in Kansas City area.

With our sister office in Santa Fe, NTSL assisted several partners in Kansas and Missouri with trail interpretation and research projects on the combined corridor of the Santa Fe, California, and Oregon National Historic Trails. In cooperation with the Cave Spring Association, our two offices continue a multi-year effort to design exhibits and landscaping for an impressive trail swale on a former home site in a suburb of Kansas City, Mo. We also are helping with an ambitious site development project for Trail Junction Park in Gardner, Kan., where the three trails split into separate corridors. Other partners in that project are the Missouri River Outfitters Chapter of the Santa Fe Trail Association, the Oregon-California Trail Association, the City of Gardner, the Gardner Museum, the Kansas Department of Transportation, the Kansas State Historical Society, and the Kansas City Area Historic Trails Association. Finally, last summer both trails offices assisted the 3-trails West Community Improvement District in conducting geophysical and soils testing at several suspected trail locations in Kansas City, Mo., to identify segments of the three combined trails. Also participating was the NPS Midwest Archeological Center and the University of Kansas.

NTSL provided \$30,000 to Accessible Arts, of Kansas City, Mo., to help send 15 blind and other visually impaired teen students and their support staff on a two-week trek along the California/Oregon/Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trails. NTSL staffer Kay Threlkeld also accompanied the students as they trekked through the Salt Lake area, interpreting trail history and helping the students to understand the pioneer experience.

NTSL Planner Sharon Brown helped Whitman Mission National Historic Site and the NPS Harpers Ferry Center plan a two-day long-range interpretive planning session, and coordinated review of a McLoughlin House interpretive brochure for the McLoughlin Memorial Association and Fort Vancouver National Historic Site.

Lending a Hand

NTSL continued strengthening our working relationships with Bureau of Land Management (BLM) offices across several states. In 2005 our trails staff assisted BLM partners by reviewing plans and designs for the California Trail Interpretive Center at Elko, Nev. Interpretive Specialist Chuck Milliken also was asked by Nevada BLM's Elko District to edit, design, and produce a series of 34 wayside interpretive exhibits for trail corridor crossing that state; and he is assisting the Pinedale Field Office, in Wyoming, to develop eight interpretive exhibits for the Lander Road segment of the Oregon and California Trails in Wyoming. NTSL Planner Sharon Brown helped John Day Fossil Beds National Monument and the BLM provide interpretive training for BLM staff at the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center in Baker City, Ore., and in partnership with the National Historic Trail Interpretive Center and the Bureau of Land Management, she co-organized a workshop session on cultural tourism at the Governor's Conference on Tourism in Pendleton, Oregon.

Touring the Trails

Our Salt Lake City trails office has launched a series of state-by-state auto tour route interpretive guides for the Oregon, California, Mormon Pioneer, and Pony Express National Historic Trails. The first of the series, interpreting the trails and guiding visitors to Pony Express, Oregon, and California Trail sites across northwestern Missouri and northeastern Kansas, was published and shipped to regional, state, and local travel and tourism information centers in those states last autumn. Another guide, now in review by our partners, retraces the four trails across Nebraska and the northeastern corner of Colorado. We plan to have that new booklet ready for distribution at the August 2006 OCTA convention in St. Joseph. The guides are free to the public. Booklets can be requested directly from NTSL, or they can be downloaded in PDF format from www.nps.gov/oreg or www.nps.gov/cali.



"Pioneer Courage" Sculpture in downtown Omaha

Trail Research, Archives, and National Register Work

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Department of Anthropology and Geography launched a multi-year interdisciplinary archeological project to investigate, document, and interpret "the dynamic patterns of frontier life along Nebraska's historic overland trails." The project, partly supported by \$29,914 in NTSL Challenge Cost Share funding, entails archeological survey, excavation, and analysis, soils investigations, documentary research, and mapping trail segments using GPS and GIS technologies. Research findings will be posted on a project web site, which will provide a public educational resource for trail and frontier studies. Results of last summer's work were presented at the national conference of the Society for Historical Archeology, held in Sacramento in January 2006.

Photographer Jim Henderson continues his multi-year effort to document faded and deteriorating emigrant inscriptions along segments of the California and Oregon Trails. The most recent phase of this project, supported by \$30,000 in trails office Challenge Cost Share funding, focuses on the Wyoming trunk of the trail corridor. Work entails nighttime photography of nearly invisible inscriptions illuminated by polarized light. Information about the photographs and inscriptions is meticulously collected and entered into an Access database that can be searched by emigrant name, location, and type of inscription (tar, incised, etc.).

NTSL also provided \$27,649 to help Southern Utah University (SUU) preserve and catalog the Howard R. Driggs trail history archive. Funding will help purchase storage materials, digitize fragile films, and hire staff to preserve, organize, and catalog the valuable trail archive, which was acquired by SUU in 2004. The project also will create an electronic searchable finding aid for the collection.



*OCTA tour
on the
Hastings
Cutoff,
California
NHT, in
Utah's
Great Salt
Lake Desert*

Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail

The Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail commemorates Latter-day Saints who left Illinois in 1846 and continued on to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake the following year. The designated trail consists only of the original route from Nauvoo, Illinois, to Salt Lake City, Utah.

Typically, our contact with the Mormon Trail Association and related groups (such as the Mormon Trail Heritage Foundation, the Mormon Battalion, Sons of Utah Pioneers, and Daughters of Utah Pioneers) is through individual chapter officers and members. In 2005, we consulted with members and boards from Wyoming, Utah, Nebraska, and Iowa Mormon Trail chapters regarding interpretive projects, auto tour route marking and guides, and development issues concerning the trail. We also represented the National Park Service at various public gatherings of these groups.



Handcart trekkers at Rocky Ridge, on the Mormon Pioneer NHT. (Photo by Jerry Sintz, courtesy of BLM)

In partnership with the Mormon Trail Heritage Foundation of Cheyenne, Wyo., NTSL interpretive staff completed four of eight planned wayside exhibits for the Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail across western Nebraska and southeastern Wyoming. Two of the Wyoming exhibits await permission from Wyoming Department of Transportation to install them at roadside rest areas along U.S. 26. The two remaining exhibits are still in the research stage.

Trailing the Mormon Pioneers

Historians and archivists with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Community of Christ, and the Iowa State Historical Society, along with other trail experts, landowners, and site managers, assisted NTSL last year by reviewing and commenting our draft interpretive driving guide for the Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail across Iowa. The guide, second in a series of state-by-state auto tour route interpretive guides, is electronically published as an Acrobat PDF document, and can be downloaded from www.nps.gov/mopi. The guide will be published in booklet form when funding becomes available.

This is the second in a new series of state-by-state interpretive auto tour route guides that NTSL is preparing for the four trails that we administer.



The Sand Hill Ruts, a stop on the Nebraska auto tour route for the Mormon Pioneer NHT

Pony Express National Historic Trail

The crouching Pony Express rider and his galloping horse have become one of the mythic icons of the American West. Many Pony enthusiasts enjoy re-creating the thrill of this cross-country race by participating in annual re-rides along the route.

NTSL consulted on various matters throughout the year with representatives from the Kansas, Nebraska, Utah, Nevada, and California Divisions of the National Pony Express Association (NPEA). The trails office also provided \$510 in support for NPEA organizational needs and travel and provided technical support and Challenge Cost Share funding for a variety of interpretive projects, described

below. Trails staff also assisted the NPEA with its annual director's conference held near Salt Lake City in September.

At the request of the Nevada Division of the NPEA, NTSL Cultural Resources Specialist Lee Kreutzer organized a consultation meeting among NPEA representatives, the Equestrian Alliance (a local recreation group in the Carson City area), the Federal Highways Administration, the Nevada Department of Transportation, and the Carson City Parks & Recreation Department concerning Pony Express and California Trails issues related to highway construction. NPEA and equestrian representatives were concerned that the new by-pass highway around the city would block the annual Pony Express re-ride route and cut off access to a popular horseback riding area on adjacent BLM lands. The group resolved the re-ride issues and identified possible new approaches to the other concerns.



*Nevada Division
NPEA rider, June
2005 re-ride
(Photo by Patsy
Lange, NPEA)*

Telling the Pony Story

With the NPEA Utah Division and the Salt Lake Field Office of the BLM, Interpretive Specialist Chuck Milliken began work on 11 new wayside exhibits to replace outdated and damaged exhibits along the Utah West Desert Backcountry Historic Byway of the Pony Express NHT. BLM and the Utah Division also conducted a major clean-up weekend in the West Desert, and installed four new generic Pony Express waysides developed by our staff.

Our Salt Lake City and Santa Fe trails offices also are collaborating with the Utah Division of the National Pony Express Association to improve interpretation of and access to the Pony Express monument at This is the Place Heritage Park in Salt Lake City. Landscape Architect Steve Burns, of our Santa Fe staff, prepared draft-

landscaping options and designed a new wheelchair-accessible trail to the popular “changing horses” statue created by noted sculptor Avard Fairbanks. Our interpretive specialist designed six new wayside exhibits, now installed at the park, as well as a wayside exhibit that presents a general history of the Pony Express route and a trail orientation exhibit. Two more waysides will be produced in 2006.

Finally, we have published an auto tour route driving guide to the Pony Express, Oregon, and California NHTs for Missouri and Kansas. The guide, first in a state-by-state series, can be requested directly from our office, or can be downloaded in Acrobat PDF format from our website at www.nps.gov/poex.

Geographic Information System

GIS is an integral part of trails programming, as its products are used routinely by in-house and independent researchers, cultural resource managers, and others.

Geographic Information System Coordinator Kay Threlkeld continues to work closely with OCTA and other partners to develop a useful way for volunteers to collect and transmit field-collected GPS data. Most significantly, she organized and taught the first of a planned series of multiple-day GIS training sessions for field volunteers in May 2005, and trainees almost immediately began using their new skills to map Oregon Trail traces in Oregon. The next training session is scheduled for May 2006.

Kay also continues to oversee a Cooperative Agreement with the University of Utah’s Department of Geography to manage our database for the four trails. Part of this work involves creating a database of journal quotes relating to specific sites along the trails. Once this work is completed, an investigator using the GIS database will be able to pull up those quotes for any site he or she is researching.

In the course of compiling that database, Kay continues building a broader collection of journal quotes linked to various other geographic locations along the trail. This information will be accessible to researchers and interpreters. For example, interpretive staff preparing exhibits for Soda Springs can open a database of quotes from John C. Fremont and other travelers concerning that site. At present, the quotes are entered in Microsoft Word, but eventually they will be entered into an electronic database for easier searching.

Kay has completed preliminary work for field documenting the Hastings Cutoff of the California NHT, with all the 24k maps scanned and digitized and all of the aerial photos scanned and geo-referenced. Our staffers are ready to begin fieldwork in the spring.

Challenge Cost Share Program Summary

The Challenge Cost Share Program (CCSP) provides matching funds to non-federal partners for a variety of projects and studies. The fund engages a wide spectrum of partners, both public and private. For more information, visit www.nps.gov and select any one of our four trail web sites from the drop-down “View All Parks A-Z” menu.

Challenge Cost Share projects for 2005 have been described in detail for each trail in the narrative above. They are summarized in Tables 1 and 2 on the following pages.

Our Salt Lake City office awarded \$181,600 in Challenge Cost Share funds across nine different projects during our 2005 budget year. Four of these were research (both documentary and field) projects, three were interpretive/public education projects, one was GIS/GPS training for volunteers, and one was for archival cataloging and indexing. Many of these projects involve two or more trails sharing the same corridor.

Work also continues on some Challenge Cost Share projects that were funded and initiated in prior years. (Challenge Cost Share projects are allotted five years for completion and expenditure of funds.) Those projects are described in the individual trails reports above, and are not included in the summary tables here.

Table 1. New Challenge Cost Share Projects for FY05 – Salt Lake City

<i>Cooperator</i>	<i>Project Purpose</i>	<i>CCS \$</i>
Accessible Arts, Kansas City, Missouri	California/Mormon Pioneer Trail Trek for blind students	\$ 30,000
Southern Utah University, Cedar City, Utah	Cataloging and preserving Howard Driggs Collection of trail-related archival materials	\$ 27,649
Applied Photographic Research, Oregon City, Oregon	Polarized light photo-documentation of emigrant names along the Oregon Trail	\$ 30,000
Oregon-California Trails Association, Independence, Missouri	Reenactment of Ezra Meeker trips commemorating the Oregon Trail	\$ 29,968
Oregon-California Trails Association, Independence, Missouri	GIS/GPS training for volunteers	\$ 20,000
University of Nebraska, Lincoln	Archeological survey and testing & project website development for Oregon/California Trail	\$ 29,914
Nebraska City Historical Society, Nebraska City	Old Freighters Museum wayside exhibit development	\$ 950
Oregon-California Trails Association, Oregon Chapter, Aloha, Oregon	GPS and detailed mapping of Oregon Trail, Keeney Pass to Oregon City	\$ 12,642
Will Bagley, Salt Lake City, Utah	Compiling bibliography of emigrant journals	\$ 477

Total: \$181,600

Resource Advocacy and Protection

Construction related to energy and mineral development, transportation, communications, and other utilities continue to drive compliance activities along the nation's historic trails.

As in previous years, our staff continually reviewed proposed energy developments, highway improvements, private construction, and other development activities along the four National Historic Trails. NTSL staff examined more than 125 project evaluations submitted by other agencies. We responded to approximately 20% with a letter or other follow-up actions. On several occasions, our personnel made field visits to consult with the managing agency, oil company representatives, State Historic Preservation Office personnel, and other stakeholders regarding a proposed undertaking.

Energy Development

By far, the bulk of the proposals reviewed by NTSL in 2005 arose from energy development proposals for lands managed by Wyoming offices of the Bureau of Land Management. Most of these proposals are related to oil and gas exploration, extraction, and transport, and most of those pertain to areas that already are extensively developed. Because energy companies and the BLM try to avoid or minimize impacts to trail resources, none of the oil and gas proposals reviewed by this office in 2005 was determined to have an adverse effect on national historic trails.

Mineral Exploration and Extraction

One of the most controversial proposals involving national historic trails administered by NTSL in 2005 arose from a proposal to test the placer mining potential of gold claims on BLM-managed lands near South Pass, Wyoming. Although the immediate proposal was for limited testing with minimal visual impact on the trails, the results of that testing could lead to another proposal for full development of a placer mining operation in that scenic and historically significant area. Further complicating matters, the proposed project would occur *within or near* the South Pass National Historic Landmark – it is difficult to determine which because no boundary was ever established for the Landmark. The testing proposal drew wide publicity and scrutiny from environmental, cultural preservation, recreational, and trails interest groups who typically opposed the proposal, as well as from others who supported the effort. Ultimately, National Park Service personnel from this office, the National Historic Landmarks Program, and the agency's Office of Minerals and Mining all were consulted by the BLM during preparation of the project's environmental assessment. The BLM determined that the limited exploration project would have no adverse effect on

historic South Pass or natural resources in the area, and authorized the project. Work is slated to begin during the summer of 2006.

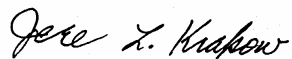
The publicity surrounding the project has resulted in the filing of many more gold claims in that area; more exploration proposals can be expected to arise in the future.

In a Nutshell...

In 2005, our staff achieved many partnership, public service, and resource protection successes.

We continued to develop close working relationships with other land management agencies, state agencies, trails interest groups, and individual landowners. We collaborated with experts and professionals from other National Park Service offices, sister agencies, tribes, and universities on trails-related issues and research. We engaged an interested public in feasibility studies, training sessions and fieldwork opportunities, consultations, and planning efforts, and assisted dozens of partners in marking, developing, and interpreting their road and trail properties. These successes continue to help build a growing constituency for national historic trails and the National Park Service.

This report of the 2005 budget year activities of the Salt Lake City Office, Intermountain Region, National Park Service, is submitted by:



Jere L. Krakow, Superintendent
February 28, 2006